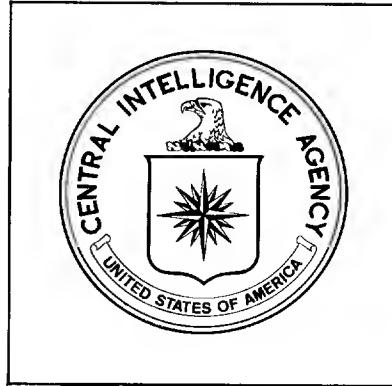


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Morocco-Spain*Rabat Concerned About Spanish Reaction
to Sahara Incidents*

Moroccan Foreign Minister Laraki made three demarches to the Spanish ambassador this week urging Madrid not to overreact to two recent incursions into Spanish Sahara by Moroccan army units. Laraki stressed that the incursions were not directed against Spain.

Morocco may have been trying to establish a presence in the area as a signal to Algeria and the pro-independence Saharan party it supports that Morocco is prepared to occupy the disputed territory whenever Madrid withdraws. If the Spanish do begin a pullback at a later date, these incursions may well be a preview of things to come.

The incidents were the first overt intrusions by regular Moroccan forces. In the first incursion, on June 8, 46 Moroccan army personnel surrendered without resistance to Spanish forces that had encircled them. They apparently were under orders not to engage Spanish troops in a fire fight. On June 10, Moroccan forces that approached a Spanish military post in the northwestern corner of the territory withdrew quickly when they found the post defended.

Rabat apparently mistakenly believed the two remote outposts had been abandoned by Spanish troops. It is now seeking Madrid's cooperation in arranging the return of Moroccan prisoners. It also does not want to close the door to negotiations with Madrid.

So far, Madrid has reacted calmly to the Moroccan incursions. It is continuing its efforts to arrange four-party negotiations with Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria to discuss the future of Spanish Sahara.

(CONFIDENTIAL)

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North Yemen*Hamdi Regime One Year After*

Colonel Ibrahim Hamdi, head of the ruling Command Council, appears to be in full control as North Yemen marks--on June 13--the first anniversary of his take-over.

Hamdi, who has neutralized both leftist and conservative opponents in recent months, is expected to solidify his position in the near future by increasing the size of the Command Council--nominally the highest authority in the country--with his supporters. Hamdi may also drop from the cabinet Minister of Interior Lt. Colonel Yahya al-Mutawakkil, his only significant remaining opponent. Al-Mutawakkil, who is also a member of the council, has been associated with the ambitious Abu-Luhum family and other anti-Hamdi groups. These changes, as well as some reform measures, may be announced by Hamdi in a major speech scheduled for June 13.

Hamdi's efforts to curtail the power of the tribal sheikhs and modernize North Yemen's political system was given a boost recently with the passage of a new election law for the Consultative Assembly. Unlike the old law, which established a complicated and indirect process of selection that favored tribal leaders, the new procedure provides for the direct election of 128 deputies from fixed constituencies. The old provision for the appointment by the president of up to 14 deputies was dropped. Elections are not expected to be held for a number of months, however. This will presumably give Hamdi more time to expand the central government's control over the hinterland.

Hamdi may attempt to mobilize the wide popularity he seems to be enjoying throughout the country in an effort to strengthen his political position even further. According to one report, Hamdi intends to emulate a gambit employed by the late President Nasir and offer his resignation on June 13. The offer would be expected to trigger mass demonstrations of support for Hamdi, following which he would quickly agree to retract his resignation.

(Continued)

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The US embassy in Sana expects Hamdi to extend the present transitional period in North Yemen's political life until the elections. The embassy believes the prospects for stability for the short and medium term look very good. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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